

Fact Check: No (again), that is not Obama's birth certificate from Kenya

By Carole Fader

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Many Times-Union readers want to know:

A copy of President Barack Obama's Kenyan birth certificate has been e-mailed to me, proving that he was not born in the United States. Should I believe it?

You certainly can believe what you like, but the widely circulated Kenyan birth certificate is a fake.

It surfaced back in August 2009, when one of the chief organizers of the so-called birther movement, attorney Orly Taitz, released the document showing that "Barack Hussein II" was born to Barack Hussein Obama and Stanley Ann (Dunham) Obama in August 1961 in Mombasa, Kenya. But the purported birth certificate quickly raised many questions, as reported by various media and fact-finding groups, including Snopes.com, a well-respected nonpartisan website that confirms or debunks rumors and urban legends:

- The date on the document is Feb. 17, 1964, and shows it being issued by the "Republic of Kenya." History books show that Kenya was the Dominion of Kenya in February 1964 and didn't adopt the name Republic of Kenya until Dec. 12, 1964.
- The age of Obama's father is incorrect. Obama Sr. was born in 1936 and would have been 24 or 25 years old at the time of his son's birth, not 26 as listed on the document.
- Mombasa is several hundred miles from Nyanza Province in western Kenya, where the Obama family lived. Nairobi would have been a much closer large city to take a woman about to deliver a baby.

- The number on the certificate is 47O44. It would be a strange coincidence for this exact number to show up: 47 was Obama's age when he became president, followed by the capital letter O (not zero) for his last name, followed by 44 for the fact that he is the 44th president.

PolitiFact.com, a nonpartisan Pulitzer Prize-winning project of The St. Petersburg Times, e-mailed the purported Kenyan birth certificate to Salim Lone, spokesman for Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga, to see what he thought.

Here was his three-sentence reply: "It's a forgery. Kenya only became a Republic in December, 1964. Other arguments could also be marshaled, but they are not needed."

Then, according to PolitiFact.com, blogger Steve Eddy of California found on the Internet an extremely similar birth certificate posted by Australian David Jeffrey Bomford on a genealogy website.

Snopes.com points out the many features shared by the documents: the same certificate number (7s 6d 495), the same book number (44B), the same page number (5733) and the similarity of names - the registrar on the Australian certificate is G.F. Lavender (or Levender; it's hard to make out), and E.F. Lavender on the Kenyan one, and the district registrar is J.H. Miller on the Australian document and M.H. Miller on the Kenyan one. Even the creases in the papers look just about the same.

Reporters from the ABC affiliate in Australia talked to Bomford, who said he had nothing to do with the hoax.

"Oh I definitely confirm that the birth certificate was mine," Bomford told ABC as reported by PolitiFact.com. "That was quite easy to see ... even the style of the birth certificate was an old South Australian one. So it's quite easy to identify that it's mine."

Taitz responded that the Bomford certificate was created to discredit her case.

But even Joseph Farah, the founder of WorldNetDaily - the conservative website that has trumpeted the birther movement's efforts - ran a column stating that he doubted the document was real, according to PolitiFact.com.

Karl Rove, the former deputy chief of staff and senior adviser to President George W. Bush and a conservative, also has said the certificate is likely a forgery.

Still, PolitiFact.com e-mailed South Australian officials to get their take on the Bomford certificate. The response came from Val Edyvean, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for South Australia:

“It appears that a South Australian loaded an image of his own birth certificate onto a family history website and that the format was used by others to ‘create’ a document which purported to be a Kenyan birth certificate for Barack Obama. As the South Australian man has now removed this image, and the date of his birth is in the period of certificates which are restricted from public access, I do not intend to add to speculation by commenting on details of either that certificate or any aspects of it.”

Snopes.com brings up another “Kenyan birth certificate” for Obama that was offered for sale on eBay by Lucas Smith in August 2009. It contains many of the same flaws as the Taitz document.

Taitz tried to introduce the second document in one of her suits charging that Obama was born outside the U.S. and thus is not qualified to be president. U.S. District Judge Clay Land dismissed the complaint and said Taitz faced sanctions if she continued to file such frivolous motions.

By the way, the Internet funsters haven’t stayed away from this hoax, Snopes.com points out. At the Republic of Kenya Birth Certificate Generator website (kenyanbirthcertificategenerator.com), you, too, can have your very own registration of birth from Kenya.

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